

Evolution: An Evaluation of Its Nature, Influence & Impact

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Introduction

Are faith and reason at variance? Is Science diametrically opposed to faith at all levels? What about evolution, how does it relate to faith, if at all they do meet at some point? Is there room for reason in faith? Are Evolution and naturalism consistent in themselves? What are we to make out of all this as relates to the Christian faith, especially in this post modern age?

The questions raised above are indeed deep and hard to reconcile, sort out or explain away that easily. The reason is simply because they rise from apparently different premises and thus may occasionally yield contradictory conclusions or answers. What an evolutionist holds may at times flatly contradict what a theist holds as dear or true. With the passage of time, philosophical naturalism has marched on and in a sense boldly asserts itself on the world's stage to the extent that someone has asserted that "*It is the Orthodoxy of the Western intellectual world*". So potent is it that anyone who dares have a contra opinion to it is drastically done away with, swiftly flushed out, ignored, rejected, dubbed "dangerous," denied employment or in some extreme cases, fired from their posting. This is evident in the major public tertiary institutional faculties, colleges or leading scientific journals. Some public enterprises are even on record to actively oppose any inclination or sympathy for established formal religion. Interestingly, even in once avowed Evangelical entities, the mood or biblical thinking has withered away in the face of the all pervasive naturalism virus couched on a post modern premise. The tide just gets higher by the day so that any ideas about religion are suffocated or at best scorned as willful ignorance, stupid or not worth dealing with. For some, evolution or naturalism are scientific facts, beyond question. Religion is perceived insane, weak, useless and obnoxious to some ears, to the extent where it is blamed for generating some of the worst human conflicts around the world, if not for planet degradation among other vices. Evolution, naturalism, anti realism and relativism are positively viewed more in line with the times- progressive, promoting the development of human aspirations or ingenuity, despite having occasional quarrels among themselves akin to little siblings in a family. In many minds, naturalism is said to be neutral, forward looking, based on fact, evidence and human experience.

But are all these claims truly the fact? Are these assertions real and true? We investigate some of these issues in this paper and encourage the reader to delve into greater detail by reading the primary sources consulted in the references section below, which undergird this dossier. Four of the papers are by the venerable Dr. Alvin Plantinga while the another is by Dr. William Dembski. A serious perusal of these will do much good for the reader as they proved handy to us.

What evolution is about: A synoptic view

Evolution is the belief held by many people that God or any supremely intelligent being did not create the world but things simply evolved from simple to complex organisms. This is said to have happened over millions, yea, billions of years when the conditions on the earth became palatably conducive for life to spontaneously commence and develop. Some aspects of the evolutionary thought add that initially there was the *Big Bang* that took place 14-16 billion years ago. This bang generated, emitted a lot of energy and matter into what later formed (coalesced) into the known universe (or a collection of them) giving some kind of order as postulated by Daniel Dennett. Some suggest that the original big bang or exploding 'primeval atom' idea was initially suggested by theistic scientist Georges Lemaitre (1894-1966) who postulated that the universe was expanding. This model was refined into the now accepted view by Russian-American, George Gamow (1904-1968). The said expanding universe view advanced by Lemaitre syncs in well with Einstein's original postulation before he modified his Relativity equation to reflect a static universe (Refer to Dockery & Thornbury's (2002) '*Shaping a Christian World view*' page 143) along side his cohorts. As the universe cooled (though some suggest that there could be myriads of Universes!) down, things progressively form, including the stars, laws of nature, planets etc. With the passage of billions of years, the planets orbited particular stars, all in a chaotic fashion (about 4.5 billion years ago). For some, like the earth, placed in just the ideal conditions or places relative to their star, conducive environments progressively developed which allowed life to spontaneously begin from one simple cell right into complex organisms we see today, though evolution is still in motion today, but too minute to be noticed. Another view argues that species developed by natural selection means hence the wide variety today, including developed brains, specialised organs such as eyes, ears, sexual reproductive organs etc. Today, so pundits posit, because of ignorance and lack of foresight, humans attribute everything to God but as time and information becomes available, people progressively cast off the blinding obsolete religious garb in preference for scientifically proven facts. Some have even postulated that religion will decline as science ascends to higher orbs. At the present time, evolution, first officially suggested by Charles Darwin in his 1859 legendary book has literary taken over the centre stage of western civilisation, with its differing variants and additions. At one time, it was unthinkable to claim to be an Atheist but now the reverse appears to be the

trend. Some of the high profile Universities that initially began on Theistic wheels have long been hijacked and over turned by evolution through perennial naturalism, relativism or antirealism (this includes entities like Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Bucknell, Cambridge and Oxford among many casualties). That said, it is prudent to mention that even among Christians, varying theistic views are held with respect to creation, its mode and the age of the earth. This paper does not delve into those details.

Probable reasons Why Evolution/Darwinism is so famous and popular today

Evolution is, no doubt, very popular today because it gives an alternative to the unbelieving world to have or develop a world view that does away with the existence of God. As we know, when Darwin first suggested that species evolved rather than by special creation, enemies of the faith swiftly embraced the teaching and aggressively propagated the unproven theory as at the time or even today. It is, however, today the most widely held view, albeit in different forms.

The Grand Evolutionary Story

The Grand evolutionary Story (GES) is a collection of five different views under the evolution umbrella. They are so called because put together, they seem to foster and strongly advocate for what ultimately Evolution is all about. They may not be entirely complementary as some claim but summarise the views held by evolutionalists. These include:

1. An old earth that is over 4.5 billion years old “created” or formed after the big bang of 14-16 billion years ago.
2. Process or “progress” evolution/thesis: This holds that the creatures developed over time not in a literal 24 hour six day period as the Bible teaches.
3. Theoretical Common Ancestry (TCA) holds that all living organisms have one common ancestor and developed from there, by mutations, natural selection etc.
4. Darwinism which teaches that organisms naturally developed from simple to complex forms.
5. Naturalistic origins: That life developed from non living matter without any intervention or creation from God. The situation was conducive to allow life to develop in the sense we know it today. Thus, nature, physical and chemical conditions were just right to allow development.

The issues alluded to above naturally evoke certain questions about origins and the age of the earth. Is the earth old or young? Among Christians, which group holds the correct view, the Creation scientists, creation evolutionists or what? There is considerable debate there but all the theistic views acknowledge the place of God somewhere in their theory, what differs perhaps is the how and when God did this creation.

Is Evolution consistent?

Not as people portray it to be. It has its serious limitations and internal inconsistencies which the trained eye easily captures. Contrary to the liberty it appears to offer some people, it has inherent dangers and difficulties some of which have led to some of the worst genocides, massacres, abortion, or acts against humanity. Hitler for instance rode of this theory.

Is Evolution science or a theory?

Evolution is not science but a theory that has never been conclusively proven. It may be popular today but that does not make it correct or true. Christianity on the other hand does not need to be proven using empirical means because it is accepted by faith, which in itself is an internal proof. If one is not converted, they cannot believe or hold that Christianity is true. Further, evolution needs arguments and reason to prove, not so the Christian faith. We accept what God has said in His word and by that we rest content. Despite the many seemingly potent arguments, scientific hypothesis blizzards attempting to prove the truthfulness of evolution, none of them has conclusively addressed some questions begging clear answers. For instance, Daniel Dennett (1995) in his '*Darwin's dangerous idea*' does not answer issues of origin, intelligence or mind. Evolution is a theory rather than fact unlike what some would like us to believe. Strictly speaking evolution is premised on some presupposition, amounting to faith!

Some leading evolutionists/naturalists yesterday and today

There are certainly many adherents to the Evolutionary agenda. Many that fill our higher institutions of learning have certainly drunk in this theory. Some of these, beginning with Darwin himself include, Dewey, Sargan, Amstrong, Gould, Russell, Dennett, Hawkins and Dawkins among others. Some of these, like Dawkins, begun in the church as kids but have vomited every ounce of religion in them having drunk in the atheistic evolutionary theories of the times. More are yet to be numbered among these foremost scholars of historical and contemporary times.

What is the difference between Perennial naturalism and Evolution?

The difference is small except to say that both deny the existence of God as having created the world. Perhaps one difference lies in the fact that Perennial naturalism may encompass evolution. In other words, one is more general while the other more specific but both fall under the Grand Evolutionary Story (GES), at least in their effects.

Is there a conflict between faith and science?

There appears to be some conflict depending on what premise one is standing on. While some hold that these are eternally at variance, others hold that it depends on one's perspective. Contingent on ones' grids, It may be wrong or right. Yet another holds that something may be theologically correct while scientifically wrong. The truth however is that objective science basically expounds God's creation upon which He has commented directly or indirectly in His word. While scientists believe in empirical evidence and facts, the Christian adds another dimension-Faith, which the naturalist may reject. This should not deter or worry the Christian; they have a right to a perspective and interpretation of the world.

How can this be harmonised?

These cannot be wholly harmonised in the sense that perspectives differ. There is more to proof and truth than just empirical evidence or proof. Methods of arriving at truth differ as well, even within scientific circles. Take for instance, methods to investigate physical sciences differs from the social, say psychology. It needs to be said then that the Christian accepts by faith that God created all things. On the other hand, the naturalist rejects that approach because they both hold different views and convictions. The truth is that evolution and naturalism are not religiously neutral, if anything, they are at daggers drawn with true religion. That said, the Christian has much to learn from objective science and should endeavour to grasp as much objective truth while thinking in Biblical lines.

Areas of disagreements among believers

As earlier intimated, believers disagree among themselves about the whole idea of evolution, creation and the age of the earth. While some hold that the earth is as old as evolutionists teach (e.g. Craig, Ross), others hold that it is relatively younger but not as young as the creation scientists (e.g. Henry Morris) hold. This latter group holds that the earth is not more than 10,000 years old, but better 6,000 years old, summoning all sorts of arguments including the famous book

“*The Genesis Flood*” by Drs John Whitcomb Jr & Henry Morris. Then there is the origin of the earth, creation order, time frame and how God created. All these areas are points of contention and disagreements among the saints. There is yet another disagreement, how we are to determine truth or existence of God, whether by the use of historical evidences or by a presuppositional approach where the Bible alone is to sit as judge and director of all things.

Why can't natural selection design anything?

Dr. William Dembski takes on the all important and difficult issue of natural selection by stating different theories, their probability and workableness while driving a point home: Evolution does not hold neither can it account for the amazing creation, development we have, from a genetics level. DNA, the basic information in a cell is so complex and intricate such that the human mind cannot fully explain. Even with recent developments into the “creation” of synthetic cells and DNA, where basic DNA is copied from pre-existing ones, things remain difficult to explain or replicate from scratch without the Ribosome cell machine originating directly from the finger of majestic designer. Natural selection, which is hailed as the key to variations in species, strengthening or weakening them, is said to be an evolutionary process that accounts for the differences in the universe, at least among organisms. But on closer examination, this theory falls short and may not sufficiently or conclusively answer all queries. We briefly summarise the reasons why natural selection, although plausible an idea, cannot design anything which eventually becomes orderly and has some form of purpose:

Generally, evolution (i.e. natural selection) cannot design anything new but basically harnesses pre-existing designs. That information and code must have come from somewhere which evolution cannot explain but simply assume it just came about! That said, both design and evolutionary algorithms have mutual lessons to learn from each other. The points below should suffice:

- Evolution of organisms moves from simple cells to complex beings.
- There is too much order in nature to be random. There must be a purpose for all this. How do we explain fitness for purpose and use?
- Evolution cannot logically hold throughout. A lot of gaps exists and inherent contradiction. Absence of total information does not prove anything.
- According to Dembski, Algorithm and order in DNA seems to support design rather than random selection.

Thus, we have synthesized, yea, taken a bird's eye view on the five papers' presented before us in addition to other sources. We now proceed to our

conclusion though we must mention what others have said and then draw take home lessons.

What Others have Said or Written about Evolution

Many arguments or write ups have been generated over many years, yea, over a century for or against evolution. The present trend seems to weigh heavily in favour of evolution and naturalism, apparently appearing to have triumphed over perceived restrictive theism. Many have argued and written volumes accusing theism of being baseless, foolish, insane, stifling independent scientific enquiry or basically antiquated, fit for the ancient rubbish heap or the chronological historical development of human progress. Increasingly, the modernistic mindset abhors reference to or suggestion to a supreme being. Thus we have outlandish polemical works poured out all over the world such as Dawkin's '*The God Delusion*', Brown's '*The Da Vinci Code*' or indeed Rushdie's '*Satanic verses*' are all calculated to attack any faith, whether Christian or not. Take another recent example from the weekly publication in Paris, France attacked in early January 2015 for ridiculing about any one, especially religion. Although we do not for a moment sanction or support physical violence, the reaction was triggered by incessant attacks on religions by the said publication. In the free world (free for who exactly?), this provocation is myriad folds, all in the name of freedom of expression. On the other hand, those laying claim to some religion of sorts, Christian or not, do not really hold on to authentic historical religion, preferring a liberal diluted (or syncretic) compromised brand. In some cases, this turns out better but not in all. The modern or even cultural Muslim, for instance, hurls out (or better said, ignores) some basic tenets of the faith such as prayer (*salah*) or *Jihad* in reference for a moderate form. Similarly, the nominal Christian opts for a watered down costless religion far removed from the authentic evangelical form. That said, God has raised an army of apologists to reason out and defend the faith, though from different perspectives. Names like John Frame, Behe, Dembski¹, Plantinga, Craig², Geisler, Haykins, Blanchard, Philip, Nyasulu³, Snelling⁴, Thompson, Whitcomb, Poythress, Gitt, Nash, Zacharias, Allen and Chatraw among others easily come to mind. There are several others from the annals of history that still speak though they be physically dead. There is need to glean from their writings to draw inspiration if not to improve on their legacy.

But we need to mention also that the world has armies of people that either reject or hold a syncretic position of Evolution and Creationism. The latter group may

¹ Some classify him as an Old Earth Creationist, though not exactly clear.

² Some classify him as a rationalist. His recent book *In quest of the historical Adam* (2021) confirms our suspicions.

³ Excellent thinking Zambian Theologian(though he denies this fact!), able to detect error from afar. He has a unique ability to intelligently, systematically engage to the glory of God. A prolific writer as well.

⁴ Great Australian Archaeologist who has wisely exploited his profession well to further the Cause of Christ.

be tolerable to the idea of God in the equation but assert that he used Evolution to create or develop the world. Hugh Ross, Clayton and other liberals fall into this category. These are often rationalists as well. The former group is a set of people that, where possible, persecute creationism, championing the cause for evolution. They are equally very well trained, white minded, credible and in many senses, well accomplished. They will not countenance any threat to their darling belief, evolution. Names like Richard Dawkins, Dennett and Stephen Hawkins easily pop up in discussions. In fact, at the present time, the majority of Scientists stand on the evolutionary foundation clearly rejecting anything connected to faith, although, evolution can arguably be said to be a form of religion in itself.

Lessons Gleaned from this consideration

There are clearly many lessons we have gleaned from a consideration of this study. Many key points came to the fore making interesting reading, if not new to readers. Below are thoughts synthesized from the reading materials:

1. Evolution remains a theory to this day, not a scientific fact. Despite many claims that it is scientific capable of falsification or testing, it still is a theory.
2. Charles Darwin initially suggested evolution over special creation in his 1859 land mark book, *the origin of species*.
3. Various theories and explanations of evolution exist to date.
4. Some theistic scientists attempt to integrate evolution in their theologies. Hugh Ross, Craig among others come to mind.
5. The Christian is safe with their Bible in regard to origins. No need to panic!
6. The universe is said to be expanding at the moment. The Hubble space Telescope seems to have helped verify this claim.
7. The sheer meticulous order in the universe points to an intelligent designer. Dembski makes much of this issue, too much order to be merely random!
8. The intelligent design movement headed by Dr William Dembski, formerly of the Baylor University, argues that order at DNA level points to a designer.
9. Faith and science have never been at variance. What appears to be is apparent only.
10. Evolution is now all pervasive in the academia and otherwise though never proved to be true. Most of the *isms* are premised on evolution propelled by writings of people like Dewey that strongly advocated for secularism over

theistic premised education system. Cornell university is a product of men like Dewey.

11. Many once well meaning Christian institutions have been hijacked by naturalistic evolution. Several of them never once name the name of Christ, despite their rich Christological Heritage. Some of these institutions include the Harvard, Princeton, Cambridge, Oxford and Yale among others. Some research has suggested that Christian institutions on average only remain so not more than 30 years after the founding fathers have left the centre stage.
12. Christians need to beware of evolution and its cantankerous offshoots. It subtly sips into one's system and context and before long grabs the reins of power sending an entity or soul to its ultimate death or unbelief.
13. Able Christian Philosophers are the desperate need of the times. More need to be encouraged to sign up to the apologetics ranks.
14. The theist has a right to hold to a position as any other person has. In the free world, difference of opinion is a given, perfectly acceptable and normal.
15. One's world view colours interpretation of the world, data or events. there is no neutrality therefore.

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that from the beginning, there appears to be an apparent tension and disagreement between science and faith. We use the word "*apparent*" intentionally because the difference is not really there. Objective science points to God and reveals His glory. Where there appears to be a difference, it is for humans to investigate, learn from or update their knowledge. While science is constantly in flux, the scriptures remain ever true, constant and consistent. The scriptures are final unlike science. Further, we have seen that evolution is not science or fact but faith in a modern dress. It is premised on a presupposition, much like faith. It has never been proved and its premise is at best biased against God, and thus not religiously neutral. Naturalism, although closely aligned to evolution takes a centre stage having a number of points under its wings like Common Ancestry which suggests that all animals have a common ancestry making man just the same like the animals. This thought negates God's existence, so some claim. They forget that God distinguished man from the rest of creation by the '*dei imago*' implanted in man at creation. In the final analysis, the believer is justified to hold a position, is perfectly normal, rational and as sane as anyone else. Only the fool says in his heart, like Dawkins or Hawkins, that there is no God! Dennett, Dawkins and others instead need to be caged in the academic zoo rather than the saint who has been set free by the glorious liberty in Christ. The Church desperately needs more formidable scholars equal to the

task presently and much into the future. Things consistently rapidly change but sadly, few saints enter the Philosophical realm. It is high time they entered the ring and silenced the wanton criticisms of the day from the spiritual philistines of today and tomorrow.

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